

CONFIDENTIAL  
MEMORANDUM

March 31, 1961

To: Fred Blackwell

From: Henry Anderson

Subject: Chronology of Events, Imperial Valley, California

I. Previous Attempts to Organize Agricultural Workers

1928: Union of United Workers of Imperial Valley (later, the Mexican Mutual Aid Society). Broken by wholesale arrests without warrant; excessive bail; disruption of workers' meetings by sheriff. (Reference: Paul S. Taylor, Mexican Labor in the United States, Vol. 6, Part 1, pp. 48-52, *passim*.)

1929: Fruit and Vegetable Workers' Union, Local 18016, AFL. Strike; broken.

1930: Agricultural Workers Industrial Union. Raids; 103 arrests; 8 leaders convicted; "county purchased more tear-gas guns, shells, and bombs than ever before." (Reference: Stuart Jamieson, Labor Unionism in American Agriculture. U.S. Department of Labor, 1945, p. 77.)

1933-34: Union of Mexican Field Workers, and Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union. Raids; 87 arrests; ACLU attorney abducted; tear-gas bombing; workers' shacks burned; 2,000 homeless. (Reference: C. McWilliams, Factories in the Field. 1939, pp. 224-5.)

1935: Vegetable Packers Association, Local 18211, AFL. Strikebreakers deputized and armed; two pickets murdered; workers "hunted from the public streets like dogs" by State Highway Patrolmen. (Reference: LaFollette Committee Hearings, Part 55, p. 20199.)

1938: International Brotherhood of Teamsters, AFL. Strike of hay loaders; broken.

1939-40: United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America, CIO. Strike of packingshed workers; broken.

1950-51: National Farm Labor Union, AFL (later, National Agricultural Workers Union). Strike of cantaloupe workers; broken by unrestricted use of wetbacks and braceros.

1955: United Packinghouse Workers of America, CIO, Local 78. Attempt to organize lettuce workers; broken by unrestricted use of braceros.

1959: UPWA, AFL-CIO, Local 78. Same as 1955.

## II. 1960-61 Strike.

Christmas Eve, 1960: 500 lettuce workers join UPWA at El Centro mass meeting, vote to demand \$1.25 per hour. Growers say they "could not increase the 90 cent hourly wage now and still compete with lettuce growing areas of other states." (Note: 80% of country's winter lettuce grown in Imperial Valley.) Growers assert "the Packinghouse workers organizing efforts signalled a break with the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee." (S.F. Chronicle, Dec. 25, 1960.)

January 5: 500 workers attend rally in Calexico. Agree on "demonstration" the next day, strike beginning January 16 if demands are ignored. AWOC joins with UPWA in organizing drive.

January 5: CONCILIATOR TRIES TO PREVENT STRIKE IN LETTUCE FIELDS (San Diego Union) (Growers refuse to meet with representative of California Department of Industrial Relations.)

January 6: 400-600 workers, in 108 automobiles, tour Valley in one-day demonstration.

UNION CALLS DEMONSTRATION SUCCESS

"IT FIZZLED" CLAIMS GROWER

(Imperial Valley Press)

January 7: Norman Smith, AWOC Director, and Clive Knowles, UPWA representative, wire Governor Brown of "imminent danger of a major struggle between growers and workers" and ask him to use good offices to affect settlement.

January 9: LETTUCE GROWERS HIT PIRE TO BROWN

"...there is no dispute between the growers and the harvest workers." (San Diego Union.)

January 10: Unions broaden demands to include union recognition; establishment of union hiring halls; 10-minute rest periods; and sanitary facilities in fields. (S.F. Chronicle)

January 10: Unions wire Secretary of Labor James P. Mitchell requesting "an investigation of the abuse of Public Law 78 in connection with the five hundred or more Mexican Nationals shown on El Centro Farm Placement Service records as domiciled in Mexico..."

January 10: Imperial Valley Lettuce Grower-Shipper Association distributes handbill: "FIELD WORKERS! LEARN THE TRUTH -- DON'T BE MISLED BY FALSE CLAIMS. DON'T LET LIES CHEAT YOU OUT OF YOUR RIGHT TO WORK..."

January 11: BRACERO PAWN IN LABOR FIGHT (L.A. Mirror)

January 12: MANY MEXICAN FARM WORKERS FIND BRACERO IS THEIR ENEMY (L.A. Mirror)

January 13: FARM UNION, GROWERS SET FOR SHOWDOWN MONDAY (L.A. Mirror)

January 16: Bruce Church lettuce field struck. Unions open soup kitchen in El Centro.

January 17: 600 BRACEROS WITHDRAWN IN LETTUCE FARM STRIKE; NATIONALS TAKEN FROM CHURCH CO.; EMPLOYMENT CHIFF SAYS RANCH WORK CREW NOT AUTHORIZED. (Imperial Valley Press) Judge Elmer Heald restrains picketing at Church Ranch.

January 18: "Federal officials today ordered Imperial Valley lettuce growers to stop using Mexican farm workers who cross the border daily, or provide housing for them." (S.F. Chronicle)

January 18: UNION PICKETS STRIKE JACESON FIELD; "THINGS FALLING APART" -- GROWER. (Imperial Valley Press.) Strike at Charles Freedman Co. Judge Elmer Heald enjoins picketing at Freedman fields.

January 19: Strikes at Royal Packing Co. and J.J. Crosetti Co.

January 21: GROWERS, CITIZENS PROTEST TACTICS; UNION METHODS HIT IN MESSAGES. (Brawley News-Press.) Citizens Action Committee to Save the Harvest formed. Wires of protest against "unprecedented action jeopardizing the harvest of \$21 million worth of food" sent to Lyndon Johnson, Robert Kennedy, Dean Rusk, Sam Rayburn, Francis E. Walter, and others. 200 "business and professional men, students, and housewives" work in Bruce Church Co. fields.

January 22: "We saw the 'big lie' technique worked by Hitler and Mussolini. We see it used by Nikita Khrushchev and his Communist cohorts. But we don't like to see it used here... (by) the labor unions." (Brawley News-Press.)

January 25: Unions demand removal of all braceros from Imperial Valley "before an explosion occurs"; complain of increasing vigilantism and threats to union organizers; criticize USDL for permitting "use of braceros as pawns in a game of delay and evasion." (L.A. Mirror.) Glenn Brockway of USDL warns growers they may lose certifications "if they persist in using braceros as strikebreakers." (L.A. Times.)

Jan. 23: LETTUCE FARM STRIKE PART OF DELIBERATE UNION PLAN  
(Los Angeles Times.)

Jan. 26: JACKSON FIELD LOSES BRACEROS (Imperial Valley Press)

Jan. 26: Imperial Valley Lettuce Growers and Shippers Association wires Governor Brown: "If the conditions which now exist in the Imperial Valley are condoned by your administration you alone will be responsible for the ruination of the State's largest industry."

Jan. 27: UNIONS STRIKE AGAIN; PICKET LINE HITS BUD ANTLE RANCH (Imperial Valley Press)

Jan. 27: DEMONSTRATION IS PLANNED; CARAVAN OF GROWERS TO SEEK LABOR RELIEF AT SACRAMENTO (Ibid.)

Jan. 27: Judge Elmer Heald issues permanent injunction prohibiting union picketing at Church and Freedman fields, on grounds "the union organizing attempt was intended to subvert and nullify Public Law 78 -- and therefore was for an unlawful purpose."

Jan. 28: Governor Brown asks "Labor Secretary Arthur Goldberg to clarify federal regulations governing hiring practices used by lettuce growers in the Imperial Valley..." (UPI)

Jan. 28: Citizens Committee to Advance the Valley Economy begins circulating petition reading, in part, "...it is shameful that Imperial Valley, boasting of being the richest agricultural valley in the United States, should be the example of the lowest paid agricultural wages in California. We do not believe that anyone should interfere with the rights of any worker who tries to raise himself to a living wage, and better his working conditions.. We cannot attract and maintain a quality labor pool on low-quality wages. ...a living wage paid and a living wage spent in the Imperial Valley is the only method to gain the prosperity and security we all seek."

Jan. 28: Growers' association wires Arthur Goldberg, asking a meeting "so that a clear cut policy and clarification of procedural practices...can be formulated."

Jan. 29: UNIONS GAIN GROUND ON NEW RULING; "STRIKE" RULED ON EIGHT FARMS; FEDERAL OFFICIALS LIMIT USE OF BRACEROS IN STIFF RULING. (Brawley News-Press.)

Jan. 31: FARMER TRIP TO EL CENTRO STARTS AT MUBA CITY  
(Marysville Appeal-Democrat)

February 1: FEDERAL JUDGE MODIFIES U.S. RULING ON LETTUCE BRACEROS (Stockton Record) SHIFTING BRACEROS OKED (Sacramento Union)

Feb. 2: 350 domestic workers sit down outside the gates of the Danny Dannenberg bracero camp, preventing egress to about 600 of 1,200 braceros billeted in the camp. Sheriff Herbert Hughes deputizes 100 men, who patrol the area with shotguns, pistols, rifles, and clubs. Several strikers are shoved to the ground by deputies. 15 AWOC and UPWA leaders are arrested and booked on charges of unlawful assembly. (Note: other newspaper reports vary: from 13 to 20 arrests; as many as 600 workers involved; as few as 50 deputies on hand; etc.) *Bail: \$262 each.*

Feb. 3: "The Mexican government ordered the removal of the braceros from the Dannenberg camp, and they were taken to the Imperial Valley Farmers Assn. camp in Brawley..."

"On orders from his government's embassy in Washington, Mexican Counsel (sic) Humberto Martinez asked the removal of the 2,023 Mexicans from 15 ranches which have been struck by the unions. The orders were delivered in person by Martinez to Edward Hayes, manager of the Farmers' Assn., who said he "declined to take action" on the orders..."

"The U.S. Department of Labor has still made no determination of its own as to whether Mexican braceros should be allowed to continue working at the struck ranches."

(Los Angeles Examiner)

Feb. 3: FARMERS BRACED FOR OUTBREAK OF NEW STRIKES; LETTUCE GROWERS STALL MOVE TO WITHDRAW 2,000 BRACEROS. "(Growers) also announced in a full-page ad in Mexicali's largest daily, ABC, that under no circumstances would they surrender to union demands." (Los Angeles Mirror)

Feb. 3: "An attorney for the Imperial Valley Lettuce Growers Association yesterday urged 500 California farmers -- some with pistols strapped to their sides -- 'not to try to take the law into your own hands' in dealing with labor organizers. \* \* \*(F.D.) McDaniel said if violence occurs, it is likely to result in demand from the Mexican consul for the return to Mexico of braceros now working in valley fields." (San Diego Union)

Feb. 4: Mexican embassy contacts Arthur Goldberg and "urgently requests removal of braceros from struck ranches for their own safety."

Feb. 5: All lettuce harvesting stopped for three days due to unfavorable prices in Eastern markets.

Feb. 5: Secretary of Labor Goldberg asks growers and unions to meet with his personal representative. Both sides agree. "Pending a report on the meeting, the department said it will

postpone its decision to remove imported Mexican farm workers from the struck fields. \* \* \* Friday the Labor Department (had) announced it (would) withdraw the 1,734 Mexican farm workers on 25,000 acres -- two-thirds of the valley's total lettuce acreage -- now being struck by union organizers. The decision dismayed the growers, and elicited the United Packinghouse Workers and Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee..." (Long Beach Independent Press-Telegram) "Goldberg...said a request of the Mexican embassy in Washington to remove the braceros would be held 'in abeyance' until he receives a report on Monday's meeting." (Portland Oregon Journal)

February 6: MEET TO RESOLVE STRIKES IN LETTUCE; GROWERS, UNION IN FIRST SESSION (Los Angeles Herald and Express)

February 7: FEDERAL CONFERENCES ON IV STRIKE CONTINUE (Yuma Sun) "Keith Mets, President of the Imperial Valley Farmers Assn., representing the growers, refused to pose for pictures with Wirtz and John Livingston, national organization director of the AFL-CIO..." (Los Angeles Examiner)

February 7: 70 PICKETS HOLD SIT-DOWN INSIDE STATE LABOR UNIT; DESKS COMMANDERED (San Diego Union)

February 8: 585 BRACEROS TOLD TO LEAVE; GOLDBERG ACTS. "The directive...had the effect of confirming action announced Friday although the number of Mexican nationals (braceros) involved was far fewer than expected earlier." (San Bernardino Telegram)

February 8: GOVERNOR "VERY CONCERNED" BUT STAYS OUT OF DISPUTE AFTER GROWERS OPPOSE MEETING (Los Angeles Times)

February 9: STRIKE HITS TWO MORE I.V. FIELDS (Yuma Sun)

February 9: SAFEGUARDS SATISFY MEXICAN DIPLOMAT (Pomona Progress-Bulletin)

February 9: MEXICO MAY REMOVE 7,000 BRACEROS (Los Angeles Examiner)

February 10: VIOLENCE FLARES IN EL CENTRO; BRACERO CAMP IS RAIDED BY UNIONISTS. "Forty demonstrators were arrested as deputies broke up the ruckus and four injured men were taken to an emergency hospital for treatment." (Tucson Star) *Bail: 7,875 each.*

February 10: POLICE JAIL TOP UNION LEADERS; 6 SEIZED IN RAID ON EL CENTRO HALL (Los Angeles Examiner) *Bail: \$7,350 each.*

February 12: UNIONS REBUFFED IN COAST DISPUTE. "Two labor unions appeared to be bucking heavy odds this week as their month-old drive to recruit farm workers bogged down in the lettuce fields of Imperial Valley." (New York Times.)

February 16: 3,000 ACRES OF LETTUCE BEING PLOWED UNDER.  
(L.A. Times) "A spokesman for the growers said the low wholesale price for lettuce was the biggest reason." (S.F. Chronicle)

February 17: AWOC PROMISES TO MOVE UP VALLEY WITH MIGRANT WORKERS; LETTUCE STRIKE BROKEN. "A Farm labor organizer admitted Thursday that Imperial Valley lettuce growers broke the strike... Clive Knowles of the United Packinghouse Workers, AFL-CIO, said pickets would remain on the 19 struck lettuce ranches 'until Goldberg decides the bracero issue under Public Law 78' despite the fact that most of the \$18 million lettuce crop has moved to market." (Lodi News-Sentinel)

February 17: 40 UPWA representatives picket office of Mexican consul-general in Los Angeles, with signs reading "Braceros or Slaves?" "Mexico Stop Scabbing in the U.S." and "The Treaty Says No to Bracero Strikebreakers."

February 19: 150 union representatives picket Imperial County Court House during preliminary hearing on workers arrested during raid on bracero camp.

February 23: MEXICO HALTS WORKERS; BARS ENTRIES INTO SOUTHWEST U.S. -- CITES LABOR FIGHT. (New York Times)

February 26: 13 I.V. GROWERS LOSE RIGHT TO USE OF BRACEROS; AUTHORITY REVOKED BY LABOR DEPT. (Yuma Sun)

February 27: Growers wire protests to President Kennedy, Secretary Goldberg, and California congressional delegation. "...growers and citizens of Imperial Valley...feel the time has now come when some in government must recognize that Imperial Valley situation is not a bona fide labor dispute... (Yesterday's revocation) is the ultimate in high-handed action and it is a serious situation when a member of a government bureau can have the power in America to kill the enterprise of Americans and destroy food-stuff produced for the public welfare."

Governor Brown wires Goldberg seeking "full consideration of the impact on California agriculture of any rulings on Mexican labor."

March 1: GOLDBERG DEFENDS POLICY (Santa Rosa Press-Democrat)

March 2: "Imperial Valley's strike-harrassed vegetable growers Wednesday obtained from Superior Judge Elmer Heald a temporary order restraining all union picketing at every vegetable field in Imperial County... Immediately after the order was issued, 18 growers left by plane for Washington, D.C., for further hearings with U.S. Labor Secretary Goldberg..." (Los Angeles Times.)

March 3: GOLDBERG SAYS STRIKE THREATENS MEXICO RELATIONS. "The Mexican government has demanded that 2,600 of its citizens working in California...be pulled out of their jobs on farms involved in a labor dispute. Goldberg said he has been stalling the request for a month in the belief he could settle the dispute. As a result ...the Mexican ambassador to the U.S. issued an ultimatum which expires today, threatening to lodge a formal government-to-government protest." (San Jose Mercury)

March 4: U.S., UNIONS, GROWERS DEBATE BAN ON BRACEROS; GOLDBERG TO ACT. (Santa Ana Register)

March 5: LETTUCE GROWERS AWAIT GOLDBERG BRACERO RULE (Sacramento Bee).

March 6: BRACERO REMOVAL DECISIONS AWAITED (Los Angeles Mirror)

March 7: LITTLE HOPE SEEN FOR REVERSING BRACERO POLICY (Bakersfield Californian)

March 7: BROWN AIMS TO MEDIATE FARM STRIKE; SEEKS CONFERENCES WITH IMPERIAL GROWERS, UNIONS (Los Angeles Times); GROWERS WON'T AID PROBE, SAYS BROWN (Los Angeles Examiner). BROWN SEES BRACERO NEED (Ventura Star - Free Press)

March 8: JUDGE TAKEN OFF LETTUCE LABOR CASE; DISQUALIFICATION OF MOUSER DELAYS HEARINGS FOR 33 (Los Angeles Times).

March 8: 18 GROWERS PUT LOSS AT \$40,000 (L.A. Examiner)

March 9: ENGLE SEEKS BRACEROS FOR LETTUCE FIELDS (Richmond (Calif.) Independent)

March 11: BRACERO PROGRAM HIT AS "COLONIALISM" IN AFL-CIO TESTIMONY (AFL-CIO News)

March 17: Spokesman for the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee said today their strike against 21 Imperial Valley lettuce growers has 'terminated.'

"In a joint statement, Norman Smith...and Clive Knowles...said: 'The strikes were broken because of the Secretary of Labor's refusal for many weeks to remove braceros (imported Mexican agricultural workers) who are being used as strikebreakers.'

"The statement praised the Mexican government for what Smith and Knowles called 'its forthright stand in opposition to the use of braceros as strikebreakers.'" (AP release)

March 22: 18 LETTUCE GROWERS GET RIGHT TO HIRE BRACEROS; GOLDBERG MAKES DECISION AFTER HEARING UNIONS ARE PULLING OUT OF IMPERIAL VALLEY. (Los Angeles Times)

cc: John Livingston  
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